



Game-based Islamic ethics for Palestine awareness: A narrative review and conceptual framework

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ABSTRACT

Background: This narrative review examines how Islamic ethical principles *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwah* (solidarity), and *'adl* (justice) can be integrated into immersive game-based learning to strengthen humanitarian awareness and empathy toward the Palestinian crisis among Muslim youth. Despite the widespread circulation of digital information, many young people remain emotionally distant from the lived realities of Palestinians, indicating a gap between awareness and ethical action. **Methods:** This narrative review examines how Islamic ethical principles *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwah* (solidarity), and *'adl* (justice) can be integrated into immersive game-based learning to strengthen humanitarian awareness and empathy toward the Palestinian crisis among Muslim youth. Despite the widespread circulation of digital information, many young people remain emotionally distant from the lived realities of Palestinians, indicating a gap between awareness and ethical action. **Findings:** The findings indicate that game-based interventions grounded in Islamic ethics have significant potential to strengthen cognitive and emotional engagement with humanitarian issues. **Conclusion:** This approach can bridge the gap between digital consumption and ethical action, encouraging youth to transition from passive awareness to active solidarity. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** The conceptual framework developed in this review offers a novel pathway for integrating religious values, digital technology, and humanitarian advocacy into a unified educational tool.

KEYWORDS: Islamic ethics; immersive learning; serious games; youth awareness; humanitarian crisis.

1. Introduction

The ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza represents one of the most persistent and devastating crises of the 21st century. For decades, Palestinians have experienced systematic displacement, military aggression, restricted mobility, and the collapse of essential infrastructure. Recent reports document widespread destruction of homes, schools, medical facilities, and the water-sanitation system, creating conditions that severely affect civilians, particularly children and women (Abuzerr et al., 2025; Dader & Joronen, 2025). These realities underscore the urgent need for global awareness and sustained international solidarity.

However, despite unprecedented access to digital information, many young people, especially those within Generation Z remain detached from the emotional and moral implications of the Palestinian crisis. Digital platforms have amplified visibility, yet they

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have also normalized exposure to violent imagery, contributing to compassion fatigue, desensitization, and a passive consumption of suffering. Studies show that 80–90% of youth obtain information through social media, but only a fraction translate this awareness into active engagement or advocacy. This disconnection signals a pressing challenge: how can humanitarian awareness be transformed into meaningful empathy and moral action?

Islamic ethics offers a powerful framework for responding to injustice. The principles of *rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *'adl* represent core moral obligations that guide Muslims in promoting compassion, solidarity, and justice. Qur'anic teachings emphasize defending the oppressed, caring for vulnerable communities, and upholding fairness. For instance, QS An-Nisa:75 calls believers to protect those who are weak and oppressed, illustrating that moral responsibility extends beyond personal concerns toward collective obligation. Likewise, QS Al-Maidah:2 commands cooperation in righteousness and piety, setting a clear ethical foundation for social action.

Despite these moral imperatives, there remains a clear mismatch between Islamic values and the lived digital behavior of many Muslim youth today. While they encounter Palestinian suffering daily through short videos, infographics, and online commentary, the emotional impact is often superficial and fleeting. Traditional educational approaches such as lectures, sermons, or textual readings may also fail to capture their attention due to generational differences in learning styles, attention span, and media preferences. Therefore, innovative educational approaches are urgently needed to connect Islamic values with the realities of Palestinian suffering in a format that resonates with contemporary youth.

One promising solution lies in game-based learning, a rapidly growing field within digital pedagogy. Research demonstrates that games can foster deep engagement, intrinsic motivation, and emotional involvement by allowing players to interact with scenarios in meaningful ways (Hamari et al., 2021; Shaffer, 2006). Immersive game narratives, in particular, have the power to transport players into the experiences of others, stimulating empathy and moral reflection. Through mechanisms such as perspective-taking, scenario simulation, and interactivity, games can create emotional insights that traditional media rarely achieve (Green & Brock, 2000).

In humanitarian education, serious games have shown potential to enhance awareness of social issues, conflict, and global inequity (Mukherjee & Guardiola, 2024). They provide safe environments where users can explore ethical dilemmas, experience emotional consequences, and reflect on decision-making. When aligned with Islamic ethics, game-based approaches can bridge the gap between moral principles and lived experiences by contextualizing teachings within real-world suffering.

This review builds upon these ideas by introducing a conceptual model for an educational game titled "Live A Day in Gaza." The game is designed to simulate daily life under blockade from the perspective of a child in Gaza. Through limited food rations, unstable electricity, water scarcity, and exposure to unpredictable violence, players are invited to emotionally inhabit the struggles that Palestinian children endure. The game concludes with structured reflection prompts and actionable steps, encouraging players to convert empathy into real advocacy.

Beyond the widespread circulation of images and videos depicting the suffering of Palestinians, there remains a critical gap in how young Muslims process, internalize, and respond to these events. Constant exposure to distressing content on digital platforms can paradoxically reduce emotional sensitivity, a phenomenon known as compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002). When audiences repeatedly encounter traumatic visuals without structured guidance or contextual understanding, their emotional capacity to empathize may diminish over time (Kinnick et al., 1996; Moeller, 2002). Recent research indicates that digital media exposure to traumatic content can lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished emotional responses (Oginska et al., 2023; Wyatt, 2024). This creates a troubling reality: even though more people "know" what is happening in Gaza, fewer are deeply moved in ways that lead to sustained moral commitment.

This widening gap signals a deeper issue in digital-era moral education. Information alone is insufficient to shape empathy or ethical behavior. Young people increasingly require experiential and participatory learning environments, rather than passive absorption of facts. They need spaces where they can emotionally connect with others' suffering, reflect on their own moral obligations, and understand how Islamic teachings relate to contemporary humanitarian crises.

At this intersection of moral responsibility, digital culture, and youth learning preferences, Islamic ethics provides not only a normative foundation but also a motivational catalyst. The three ethical pillars central to this *review* *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *'adl* (justice) form a comprehensive moral system that emphasizes sensitivity to human suffering and commitment to social equity.

Rahmah in Islamic discourse is often described as a universal compassion that extends across all human beings. Classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali highlight *rahmah* as the heart of ethical conduct, a disposition that motivates individuals to care for the vulnerable and alleviate hardship. *Ukhuwah*, or solidarity, reinforces the idea that Muslims are bound by a shared moral community. It is more than emotional affiliation; it is a social obligation that demands action in the face of injustice. *'Adl*, or justice, urges believers to uphold fairness and oppose oppression. It calls for defending the rights of the marginalized and restoring dignity to those who have been harmed.

These three values are particularly relevant to the Palestinian context. The suffering of civilians, especially children, calls for compassion; the shared identity and moral ties between Muslims globally call for solidarity; and the systemic injustice of occupation and blockade demands collective commitment to justice. Therefore, integrating Islamic ethical principles into modern educational tools is not merely an academic exercise, it is an urgent response to a humanitarian and moral crisis.

However, translating these ethical ideals into emotionally resonant experiences requires more than traditional teaching methods. This is where immersive digital media, especially games, become important. Unlike videos or articles, games allow users to actively participate in simulated environments (Kral et al., 2018). They encourage players to make decisions, confront dilemmas, and experience the consequences creating a deeper emotional and cognitive connection to the subject matter. Studies in psychology show that perspective-taking, when facilitated through interactive media, significantly increases empathy and moral sensitivity (Batson et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2020). Similarly, narrative transportation theory suggests that when users are fully absorbed in a story, they are more likely to internalize its messages and align emotionally with its characters (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; Gerrig, 1993).

Applying these ideas to the Palestinian crisis, a well-designed educational game has the potential to help players understand the realities of life under siege not as distant observers, but as participants navigating the daily challenges that Palestinian children face. For example, limiting a player's access to food, clean water, electricity, and safety can create emotional parallels to the constraints experienced by real civilians in Gaza. These design elements move beyond factual awareness, guiding players to feel the injustices and to reflect upon their moral implications.

In this context, the proposed game "Live A Day in Gaza" serves as a medium that merges Islamic ethics with immersive learning principles. The goal is not entertainment, but meaningful emotional and moral engagement. Through structured gameplay, players confront ethical dilemmas, resource shortages, and safety threats/experiences that replicate the hardships of life in conflict zones. When combined with reflective tasks grounded in Islamic ethics, such a game can guide players toward understanding their moral duties in advocating for justice and supporting humanitarian causes.

Moreover, game-based learning has been shown to promote retention, engagement, and behavioral intention. Research demonstrates that game mechanics such as goal-setting, feedback, and narrative immersion significantly enhance motivation and emotional investment (Hamari et al., 2021; Schrier & Farber, 2016). Games designed for empathy development have proven effective in fostering perspective-taking, emotional engagement,

and prosocial behavior across diverse contexts (Dishon & Kafai, 2020; Farber, 2021). In Islamic education contexts, experiential approaches have been found to strengthen value internalization by up to 70–80% compared with traditional lecture-based methods. These findings support the idea that games can become powerful tools for teaching ethical principles in ways that resonate with the psychological and cultural realities of modern youth.

In addition to its pedagogical advantages, a game-based approach also aligns with global trends in digital advocacy. Young people today engage deeply with interactive media, and many express themselves politically through online platforms, digital art, and virtual communities. Integrating Islamic ethics into a game that addresses a real humanitarian crisis offers a culturally relevant and technologically innovative strategy to mobilize youth activism. By embedding moral lessons within immersive experiences, the game can help cultivate a generation that is not only informed but also emotionally connected and morally driven to support justice for Palestine. Thus, the introduction establishes the motivation, context, and theoretical foundations for this narrative review. The following sections will elaborate on the methods used to synthesize interdisciplinary literature, the development of the conceptual framework, and the broader implications of integrating Islamic ethics with game-based learning for humanitarian awareness.

2. Methods

This study employs a narrative review design combined with conceptual framework development, an approach commonly used in interdisciplinary research where empirical data are limited but theoretical synthesis is essential. Narrative reviews are particularly suited for emerging or complex topics that integrate multiple bodies of knowledge, such as Islamic ethics, immersive digital pedagogy, humanitarian studies, and socio-political analyses of Palestine. Because the topic intersects theology, psychology, game design, and conflict studies, a flexible and integrative methodological approach was necessary to capture the breadth and depth of relevant literature.

2.1 *Methodological purpose and literature search strategy*

The primary objective of this review is to explore how Islamic ethical principles *rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *'adl* can be integrated into game-based learning as a tool for enhancing empathy and humanitarian awareness related to the Palestinian crisis. Since no existing empirical studies have directly examined “Islamic ethics + serious games for Palestine awareness,” a narrative review allows the researcher to synthesize theoretical, conceptual, and empirical findings from diverse fields to propose a new model. Narrative reviews are recommended when the goal is to develop new conceptual pathways, identify gaps in the literature, and generate models that inform future empirical research (Snyder, 2019). In this study, the narrative review approach allows the integration of Islamic ethical theory, psychological theories of empathy and perspective-taking, media theories of narrative transportation, game-based learning and immersive pedagogy, as well as humanitarian and conflict studies on Palestine. This broad perspective provides the necessary foundation for developing the conceptual game model “Live A Day in Gaza.”

The literature search was conducted between January and October 2025 across four major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Additional Islamic studies references were obtained from reputable online repositories such as Al-Maktabah al-Waqfiyyah, Dar al-Minhaj, and university-based Islamic ethics journals. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators, including “Islamic ethics” OR “*akhlaq Islam*”, “*rahmah*” AND “*Islamic compassion*”, “*ukhuwah*” AND “*Muslim solidarity*”, and “*adl*” OR “*Islamic justice*”. Additional terms related to the Palestinian context were also used, such as “*Gaza blockade*”, “*Palestine conflict*”, and “*humanitarian crisis Palestine*”. To capture literature on pedagogical approaches, the search incorporated “*immersive learning*” OR “*game-based learning*”,

“serious games empathy”, “narrative transportation” OR “perspective-taking”, and “youth digital activism Palestine”. The inclusion criteria required sources published between 2000–2025, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, or institutional reports that discussed Islamic ethics, Gaza’s humanitarian conditions, empathy psychology, or game-based learning, and were written in English or Indonesian. Exclusion criteria included purely political analyses without humanitarian or ethical dimensions, non-scholarly commentaries or informal web articles, and sources that were unrelated to digital pedagogy or moral education. The search initially identified approximately 342 sources. After screening abstracts, removing duplicates, and applying inclusion/exclusion criteria, 109 sources were retained for full-text reading. From these, 57 sources were selected as core references for synthesis and conceptual model development.

2.2 Analytical approach

The selected literature was analyzed using qualitative thematic synthesis, following three stages, the first thematic identification, themes were identified through repeated reading of key texts related to the definitions and dimensions of Islamic ethics, emotional and moral responses to humanitarian crises, psychological mechanisms involved in empathy development, and learning outcomes associated with immersive games. The analysis also incorporated literature describing the lived experiences of Palestinian civilians, particularly children, and studies examining digital activism among Muslim youth. During this process, recurring concepts such as compassion, solidarity, justice, suffering, digital immersion, and moral engagement emerged. The next stage involved integrating themes across fields by identifying how concepts intersected with one another. Islamic ethics (*rahmah-ukhuwah-'adl*) was compared with psychological constructs such as empathy, moral reasoning, and altruistic motivation. Narrative transportation theory was then connected with Islamic reflective practices like *tadabbur* and *tafakkur*. Additionally, principles of game-based learning were linked with humane education and conflict-centered pedagogy. This cross-disciplinary analysis enabled the emergence of linkages between ethical values and digital experiential learning. The final stage involved constructing the conceptual framework for “Live A Day in Gaza” by mapping the key components of the design. The inputs included Islamic ethics, real-life Palestinian conditions, and immersive learning mechanisms. These were connected to processes such as gameplay mechanics, emotional triggers, and perspective-taking sequences, which together were intended to generate outputs in the form of empathy, moral awareness, solidarity, and justice-oriented intention. The game model is grounded in experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), narrative transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000), and Islamic value internalization theory. The synthesis resulted in a structured conceptual framework that will be explained in detail in the Results and Discussion section.

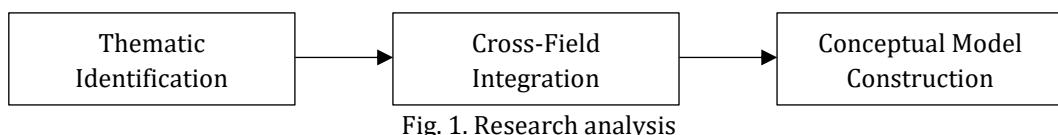


Fig. 1. Research analysis

2.3 Ethical considerations and limitation

Although this study does not involve human subjects or personal data, ethical reflection remains essential due to the sensitive nature of the Palestinian crisis. The narrative review follows three key principles, respect for suffering by avoiding sensationalism or the exploitation of real trauma; accuracy and integrity through the use of verified academic sources to prevent misinformation; and cultural and religious sensitivity by ensuring that Islamic ethical interpretations are grounded in recognized scholarly texts. The study also acknowledges that any representation of conflict-zone experiences must be handled responsibly, especially when proposed within an educational game context. As a

narrative review, this study does not claim exhaustive coverage of all literature, nor does it provide empirical testing of the conceptual model. The absence of primary data limits the ability to measure the effectiveness of the proposed game. However, the strength of this approach lies in its ability to build a foundational theoretical model that future researchers can empirically validate through design-based research, prototype testing, or mixed-method evaluations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Humanitarian realities in Gaza

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has persisted for more than a decade, with cycles of escalation that repeatedly devastate civilian life. Under the blockade imposed since 2007, Palestinians in Gaza have experienced severe restrictions on mobility, economic activity, access to healthcare, and essential services such as electricity and clean water. These conditions, documented across numerous humanitarian and academic reports, constitute what scholars describe as prolonged structural violence—a form of harm produced not only through direct military action but also through systemic deprivation embedded in political structures (Dader & Joronen, 2025).

One of the most critical issues is the collapse of the health system. Hospitals frequently operate with limited fuel, medicine, and equipment. Power outages, which can last 16–20 hours per day, disrupt life-saving procedures such as dialysis, neonatal care, and emergency surgery (Marie & Battat, 2021). Many facilities rely on backup generators that cannot meet the increasing demand, especially during periods of military escalation. This situation disproportionately affects children, pregnant women, and patients with chronic illnesses who require consistent and specialized care.

Equally alarming is the water and sanitation crisis, which has deepened due to damage to pipelines, wastewater facilities, and desalination plants. More than 95% of Gaza's water is undrinkable because of high salinity and contamination, forcing families to consume unsafe water or rely on expensive deliveries (Abuzerr et al., 2025). Unsanitary conditions have led to spikes in diarrheal diseases, typhoid, hepatitis A, skin infections, and respiratory illnesses/conditions that thrive in overcrowded shelters and temporary housing.

The psychological impact of continuous bombardment, displacement, and loss is also profound. Children, who make up nearly half of Gaza's population, live with chronic trauma. Studies indicate high rates of anxiety, sleep disturbance, and post-traumatic stress among children exposed to recurring violence (Farhat et al., 2023). Many have lost homes, family members, and access to education. These psychological wounds are exacerbated by the uncertainty of not knowing when the next escalation will occur.

In addition to direct harm, the blockade has eroded economic stability. Unemployment rates among youth regularly exceed 60%, one of the highest in the world. Many families depend on humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs. This economic precarity contributes to food insecurity, with large portions of the population surviving on fewer than 1,200 kcal per day far below recommended standards. During escalations, calorie intake can drop even further as supply chains collapse and aid routes are restricted.

The severity of deprivation challenges common narratives that frame Gaza solely as a site of conflict. Rather, it is a space where daily life is shaped by interconnected crises that compound each other: health system collapse, water shortages, psychological trauma, and economic instability. Understanding these layered realities is necessary for crafting educational tools that aim to foster empathy and moral engagement. Without this context, any representation of Gaza risks oversimplification or emotional detachment.

Moreover, the media portrayal of Gaza tends to oscillate between two extremes: highly graphic violence or abstract political discourse. Both can distance viewers from genuine emotional connection. Graphic content may overwhelm audiences, leading to avoidance or compassion fatigue, while political discussions often obscure the everyday lived experiences of civilians. This disconnect is especially significant for youth in digital

environments, where content is consumed rapidly and without structured reflection. As a result, young Muslims may recognize that Gaza is suffering, but they may not fully grasp the texture of daily life under siege, the constant calculation of how long clean water will last, the fear of sending children to school, or the challenge of completing homework without electricity. These micro-struggles form the emotional foundation of the humanitarian crisis, yet they rarely appear in mainstream awareness. In this review, the humanitarian realities of Gaza serve as the factual foundation for the conceptual model “Live A Day in Gaza.” To evoke empathy, educational tools must ground themselves in accurate representation. Rather than relying on trauma spectacle, the model emphasizes structural hardships, human resilience, and ethical reflection, making it suitable for responsible and meaningful learning experiences. Understanding Gaza’s humanitarian context also reveals why Islamic ethics is essential in framing responses to this crisis. The suffering endured by Palestinians is not only a political issue; it is a profound moral challenge that requires compassion, solidarity, and justice-oriented action values deeply embedded in the Islamic tradition. As the next section elaborates, these ethical principles create a moral vocabulary that helps young Muslims interpret their emotional responses and translate them into meaningful action.

3.2 Islamic ethics: *Rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *'adl*

Islamic ethics offers a comprehensive moral framework that helps Muslims understand their obligations toward the suffering of others. In the context of Gaza, where civilians face structural injustice and continuous humanitarian crises, Islamic ethics provides both the emotional grounding and practical direction for meaningful action. Three core principles *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwah* (solidarity), and *'adl* (justice) form the heart of this ethical framework. These values do not function in isolation; rather, they interact and reinforce one another, creating a holistic moral orientation that guides responses toward oppression and human suffering.

Table 1. Three core principles of this ethical framework

Principle	Explanation
<i>Rahmah</i> : Compassion as a Universal Ethical Imperative	<i>Rahmah</i> , often translated as compassion or mercy, sits at the center of Islamic moral consciousness. The Qur'an introduces God as Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim. The Most Compassionate and The Most Merciful establishing compassion as the foundation of ethical behavior. Classical scholars describe <i>rahmah</i> not merely as emotional sympathy, but as a call to alleviate suffering wherever it is found. Kilic et al. (2025) describe <i>rahmah</i> as an existential and relational virtue, emphasizing that every human being is worthy of compassion.
<i>Ukhuwah</i> : Solidarity and the Bond of Shared Humanity	<i>Ukhuwah</i> is another cornerstone of Islamic ethics. While often interpreted as brotherhood among Muslims, its ethical scope extends to all humanity. It emphasizes caring relationships, mutual responsibility, and collective wellbeing. Kumullah & Ridho (2024) argue that <i>ukhuwah</i> is not merely an emotional connection, it is a social principle that requires individuals to act in support of others, especially those experiencing injustice.
<i>'Adl</i> : Justice as a Moral Response to Oppression	The third principle, <i>'adl</i> (justice), is perhaps the most overtly relevant to the Palestinian crisis. Justice in Islam involves fairness, dignity, and the protection of rights. It also demands active opposition to oppression, as stated in QS An-Nisa:75, which calls believers to defend those who are weak and oppressed. Nur (2021) highlights that <i>'adl</i> includes both restoring rights and preventing harm, making justice a proactive and necessary ethical stance.

Based on Table 1, in the context of Gaza, *rahmah* requires more than feeling sorrow when seeing destructive images; it asks Muslims to deeply recognize the humanity of Palestinians and respond in ways that reduce their hardship. Compassion here becomes

active, not passive. It compels individuals to understand the lived realities under blockade not simply through statistics but through experiences that evoke heartfelt concern. This is where immersive educational tools, such as the conceptual game proposed in this study, become important. By simulating daily challenges, limited food intake, water scarcity, fear of bombardment the game can help cultivate *rahmah* in a meaningful way. When compassion is grounded in experiential understanding, it becomes more likely to inspire sustained humanitarian concern and ethical engagement.

In the Palestinian context, *ukhuwah* manifests in the recognition that the pain of the oppressed is not theirs alone but is shared by the global ummah. The Qur'anic analogy that believers are like one body where injury to one part causes pain to the whole captures the essence of this interconnectedness. Yet, in digital spaces, this principle is often weakened by distraction, rapid information turnover, and the emotional distancing caused by endless scrolling through online tragedies. Immersive learning tools can help restore this sense of connection by placing users inside the narrative of Gaza, not as external spectators but as empathetic participants. When players navigate daily experiences choosing how to allocate limited resources or how to protect family during danger they temporarily share the emotional weight that Palestinians carry. This fosters a relational understanding that aligns with *ukhuwah*: the recognition that their wellbeing is tied to ours.

In the context of Gaza, '*adl*' directs attention to the political structures that perpetuate harm: blockades, forced displacement, and the systemic denial of basic needs. Islamic ethics therefore does not only encourage compassion for the suffering but also urges awareness of the structural forces that produce such suffering. Educational tools informed by '*adl*' must therefore avoid depoliticizing the crisis. The proposed game framework integrates justice by presenting players with scenarios that subtly reveal why resources are scarce or why civilians face danger. Instead of portraying suffering as random, it contextualizes hardship within systems of restriction and occupation. This helps learners understand that justice requires challenging those systems, not merely feeling sympathy.

Rahmah, *ukhuwah*, and '*adl*' together provide a rich ethical foundation for humanitarian education. However, these values cannot be internalized through abstract knowledge alone; they require emotional resonance and reflective engagement. Immersive learning environments offer a powerful bridge between ethical principles and real-world humanitarian crises. When players inhabit the narrative of a child in Gaza, they experience *rahmah* through emotional resonance with hardship, *ukhuwah* through shared identification with the character's struggle, and '*adl*' through the recognition of structural injustice. This alignment shifts Islamic ethics from something learners merely "know" into something they genuinely "feel," strengthening moral motivation and the potential for action. For many young Muslims, traditional ethical education often feels disconnected from current global issues. By integrating Islamic ethics with digital formats familiar to youth, educators can make ethical learning more relevant and impactful. This is particularly important given research showing that value internalization is significantly stronger when learning involves active participation. Thus, Islamic ethics provides a moral foundation, while immersive games offer the experiential medium needed to bring those values to life. Together, they create a transformative approach for strengthening youth awareness, empathy, and action toward the Palestinian humanitarian crisis.

3.3 Immersive learning and game-based pedagogy

Immersive learning has become increasingly recognized as one of the most effective approaches for fostering deep engagement, emotional resonance, and conceptual understanding among learners, especially youth who are accustomed to interactive digital environments. Unlike traditional instruction, immersive learning relies on participation, simulation, and experiential elements that place learners directly inside a scenario (Dwivedi et al., 2022). This makes it particularly powerful for subjects involving empathy, social justice, or humanitarian awareness, which require not only cognitive comprehension but also affective and moral engagement (Hamari et al., 2021). Game-based learning, a subset

of immersive learning, uses games not for entertainment alone but as tools for education, critical reflection, and emotional involvement. Studies show that games can significantly enhance motivation because they activate intrinsic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). When learners perceive themselves as agents within a narrative, their engagement becomes more personal and meaningful.

Educational games differ from passive digital media because they require active decision-making, prompting players to process scenarios, weigh consequences, and reflect on their actions (Mullins et al., 2018). This cognitive involvement enables higher information retention and deeper emotional understanding. Immersive games support learning through several mechanisms, including perspective-taking, which allows players to adopt someone else's viewpoint. Research in humanitarian contexts shows that perspective-taking should be promoted through simulations, role play, and exposure to narrative, as active and imaginative immersion into others' stories strengthens empathic reasoning (Kelty et al., 2020; Palmer & Anderson, 2022); feedback loops that provide immediate consequences to choices; and agency, which gives players the ability to make decisions and increases emotional ownership. These mechanisms are highly relevant when teaching about humanitarian crises. Instead of presenting static data (e.g., number of casualties, hours of electricity outages), an immersive game can simulate what those numbers mean in the rhythm of daily life. The player begins to understand not just what is happening, but what it feels like.

Generation Z and Alpha grow up surrounded by digital interfaces, interactive media, and gamified environments. Their learning preferences differ significantly from older generations, attention spans are shorter, expectations for interactivity are higher, and emotional responses are often driven by visual and experiential stimuli. Thus, immersive learning aligns naturally with their cognitive and behavioural patterns. They tend to respond better to real-time challenges than to long lectures, learn more quickly when they can manipulate scenarios, and connect emotionally when they feel part of a narrative. Because of this, immersive learning becomes a uniquely effective strategy for cultivating empathy toward complex global issues such as the Palestinian crisis, which might otherwise feel distant or abstract.

Serious games designed for education or advocacy have shown strong potential in shaping attitudes toward social justice issues. Studies indicate that these games can increase empathy toward marginalized groups, improve understanding of systemic oppression, motivate players to engage in social activism, and challenge stereotypes and misinformation. For example, games addressing refugee experiences, poverty, or environmental crises have been shown to significantly shift players' moral perspectives and emotional responses (Belman & Flanagan, 2010). These outcomes occur because immersive games place players in morally loaded situations and force them to engage with dilemmas that mirror real-world injustices. For the Palestinian context, a serious game can achieve something that social media often cannot: it can slow down the player's attention, create space for reflection, evoke a personal connection, and shift awareness from passive consumption to active moral engagement. One of the most critical advantages of immersive learning is its ability to bridge the gap between cognitive knowledge ("I know Palestinians suffer") and affective empathy ("I feel the weight of what they endure"). This gap is important because humanitarian action is rarely driven by information alone; it is grounded in emotional understanding and personal connection. Research in moral psychology shows that empathy is strengthened when individuals see the world from another's perspective, feel a sense of responsibility for another's wellbeing, and experience simulated moral dilemmas. Immersive games can replicate these conditions more effectively than traditional media. For example, a game may require the player to decide how to allocate limited water among family members. Such decisions mirror real choices families make in Gaza, transforming statistical realities into lived experiences.

Despite its strengths, the use of immersive games for humanitarian education requires caution, as several challenges need careful attention. There is a risk of trauma exposure, meaning games must avoid reproducing violence in ways that retraumatize or

sensationalize suffering. There is also a risk of oversimplification, since humanitarian crises are complex and game mechanics should not reduce structural injustice to mere “obstacles.” In addition, ethical representation is essential, requiring narratives to remain respectful, accurate, and culturally sensitive when portraying real communities. These challenges highlight the importance of responsible design principles, which are incorporated into the proposed conceptual model. Immersive learning aligns naturally with Islamic ethical pedagogy. Islamic education has long emphasized experiential reflection (*tadabbur*) and contemplation (*tafakkur*) as ways to internalize moral values. When learners engage with meaningful narratives and reflect on their implications, they mirror these traditional methods. Thus, integrating immersive learning with Islamic ethics is not a departure from tradition but an extension of it into digital pedagogy. Immersive learning provides the experience, while Islamic ethics provides the meaning. Together, they create a powerful mechanism for cultivating compassionate, just, and ethically grounded responses to humanitarian crises.

3.4 Conceptual model: “Live a day in Gaza”

The conceptual model “Live A Day in Gaza” is designed to integrate Islamic ethics with immersive game-based learning in order to foster empathy, moral reflection, and justice-oriented awareness among youth. Rather than recreating trauma or sensationalizing violence, the model deliberately focuses on everyday struggles, structural deprivation, and ethical decision-making, drawing on verified humanitarian data and grounding the learning experience in Islamic moral principles. This model is structured around four interrelated components—contextual foundation, gameplay structure, ethical integration, and reflection-to-action pathways—which together create an immersive, meaningful, and ethically guided educational experience. At the core of the model is a contextual foundation that represents the realities of daily life in Gaza under blockade. The game simulates structural challenges commonly documented in humanitarian literature, such as limited electricity access, restricted water supply, food shortages and calorie deficits, inadequate medical resources, insecurity, and restricted mobility. These realities are translated into concrete gameplay constraints that shape the player’s experience. For example, players may begin the day with severely limited food rations, experience intermittent water availability that forces difficult choices between drinking, cooking, and hygiene, or encounter electricity outages that disrupt tasks and increase vulnerability. By embedding factual humanitarian conditions into gameplay mechanics, the model enables players to engage with Gaza’s realities through lived simulation rather than abstract or detached information.

The gameplay structure is organized to mirror a typical day under blockade, progressing through phases of Morning Survival, Afternoon Uncertainty, and Nighttime Fear and Reflection. During the morning phase, players manage scarcity by making difficult decisions about food allocation, water collection, and family responsibilities, thereby confronting the emotional tension inherent in resource deprivation. The afternoon phase introduces unpredictability through disruptions such as blocked roads, cancelled schooling, sudden power cuts, and heightened fear triggered by environmental cues, reflecting the instability that characterizes everyday life. At night, the game shifts toward reflection, prompting players to consider what was sacrificed, who was affected by limited resources, and how insecurity shaped their emotional state. These reflective moments deepen emotional engagement and help internalize the meaning of hardship beyond gameplay. To support empathy development, the game employs mechanics grounded in empathy and narrative engagement research, including choice under constraint, goal frustration, environmental storytelling, unpredictability, and family-centered tasks. These mechanics are intentionally designed to evoke moral tension, psychological stress, and relational concern, ensuring that the experience is not merely informational but transformative in nature.

Islamic ethics are integrated throughout the gameplay via narrative prompts, character interactions, and the consequences of player decisions. The principle of *rahmah*

(compassion) is reflected in situations where players must care for family members, decide how to share limited food or water, and comfort younger siblings. Compassion is reinforced not through points or rewards, but through emotional outcomes such as strengthened family bonds, gratitude, and symbolic affirmation, emphasizing its intrinsic moral value. *Ukhuwah* (solidarity) emerges through opportunities for cooperation with neighbors, mutual aid, and community-based problem-solving, reinforcing the idea that solidarity is enacted through everyday acts of support. Meanwhile, '*adl* (justice) is introduced through contextual explanations of resource scarcity, healthcare barriers, and movement restrictions, guiding players to recognize that deprivation is rooted in structural injustice rather than individual failure, without oversimplifying political complexities.

Following gameplay, the model incorporates a structured reflection and action pathway that bridges emotional engagement with real-world ethical commitment. Players participate in guided reflection activities that encourage emotional awareness, ethical mapping of their decisions in relation to *rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and '*adl*', perspective-taking toward real children living in Gaza, and action planning focused on humanitarian awareness or advocacy. Consistent with narrative persuasion research, such structured reflection helps transform emotional experiences into concrete moral commitments. The game concludes by offering optional educational resources and links to humanitarian initiatives, allowing empathy cultivated through gameplay to translate into informed real-world engagement. Overall, the proposed model demonstrates the potential synergy between Islamic ethics and game-based pedagogy in cultivating humanitarian awareness. By transforming abstract suffering into embodied understanding, aligning interactive learning with moral principles, and supporting reflection-driven action, the model addresses an educational gap in which youth often encounter Palestinian suffering passively through media without deeper emotional or ethical connection. Through constrained choices and moral dilemmas, players are guided toward a more profound appreciation of Palestinian resilience, hardship, and the ethical imperative of compassion and justice.

3.5 Potential impact on youth empathy and advocacy

One of the most important contributions of the conceptual model "Live A Day in Gaza" is its potential to increase youth empathy, strengthen moral engagement, and promote meaningful advocacy for humanitarian justice. Young people today live in a digital environment saturated with information, images, and political commentary. However, high exposure does not automatically translate into understanding or emotional connection. Many experience desensitization, fatigue, or a sense of helplessness when confronted with the suffering of Palestinians. An immersive, ethically grounded game offers an alternative pathway that can transform passive awareness into active moral consciousness. Figure 2. Conceptual pathway of the "Live A Day in Gaza" model, illustrating how immersive simulation, Islamic ethical integration, critical awareness, and structured reflection transform empathy into sustained advocacy and collective solidarity.

Table 2. Learning mechanisms and ethical outcomes in the live a day in gaza model

Key Aspect	Conceptual Description	Game-Based Implementation	Educational and Ethical Outcomes
Empathy Through Lived Simulation	Empathy is understood as a cognitive and affective process shaped by perspective-taking, emotional resonance, and contextual understanding.	Players make decisions under conditions of scarcity, uncertainty, and fear that mirror crisis situations (e.g., rationing water and managing electricity outages).	Development of situated empathy that is deeper and more enduring than passive observation.
Emotional Anchoring	Specific emotional experiences enhance memory retention and long-term concern.	Meaningful moments such as comforting family members or negotiating limited resource use.	Sustained humanitarian concern beyond gameplay.

Moral Engagement Through Islamic Ethics	Moral values are internalized as part of personal and religious identity rather than external rules.	Reflection on decisions through <i>rahmah</i> (compassion), <i>ukhuwah</i> (solidarity), and <i>'adl</i> (justice).	Stronger moral engagement and faith-based motivation for humanitarian action.
<i>Rahmah</i> (Compassion)	Compassion as active and empathetic care for others.	Choosing to share limited water or food with neighbors.	Reinforcement of empathy and altruistic behavior.
<i>Ukhuwah</i> (Solidarity)	Solidarity as collective moral responsibility.	Coordinating with community members to manage shortages.	Growth of collective empathy and shared responsibility.
<i>'Adl</i> (Justice)	Awareness of structural injustice underlying everyday hardship.	Narrative exposure to blockades, resource restrictions, and damaged infrastructure.	Increased sensitivity to systemic injustice and ethical reasoning.
Critical Awareness of Structural Injustice Transforming Empathy into Advocacy	Humanitarian literacy that distinguishes incidental hardship from systemic suffering. Empathy combined with moral obligation leads to meaningful action.	Contextual explanations embedded in gameplay. Post-game reflection and personal action planning (education, fundraising, advocacy).	Ability to challenge misinformation and engage in informed discussions. Development of ethical agency and sustained social engagement.
Community and Solidarity Reinforcement	Collective learning experiences strengthen social bonds and humanitarian movements.	Group gameplay, discussion, and shared reflection.	Mobilization of collective solidarity and long-term engagement.
Addressing Limitations of Digital Activism Broader Educational Applicability	Digital activism often involves superficial or performative engagement. The model can be adapted to other humanitarian contexts.	Structured, reflective, and ethically grounded immersive learning. Integration of immersive learning with faith-based ethical reflection.	Shift from reactive posting to informed and thoughtful advocacy. Application to refugee education, marginalized communities, and climate-related crises.

Empathy is not merely an emotional reaction but a cognitive and affective process shaped by perspective-taking, emotional resonance, and contextual understanding. Psychological research demonstrates that empathy increases when individuals are able to imagine themselves in the circumstances of others (Batson et al., 2014), a process that is naturally facilitated through game-based learning. By placing players in decision-making situations under constraints similar to those experienced in crisis contexts, immersive games enable a deeper form of engagement than passive exposure. In *Live A Day in Gaza*, players encounter how scarcity, uncertainty, and fear shape everyday life, learning that seemingly small decisions—such as how to ration water or respond to sudden electricity outages—carry significant emotional and ethical consequences. These experiences generate situated empathy, a form of understanding that emerges from simulated lived experience rather than distant observation. Moreover, immersive learning creates emotional anchoring, as specific moments, such as comforting a frightened sibling or negotiating limited resource use, remain salient long after gameplay ends and serve as powerful motivators for sustained humanitarian concern.

The distinctiveness of the proposed model lies in its grounding in Islamic moral principles, which deepens moral engagement beyond cognitive awareness. When players

reflect on their in-game decisions through the ethical lenses of *rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *'adl*, they are not only learning about the situation in Gaza but also engaging in self-reflection regarding their religious and moral responsibilities. This process encourages moral internalization, in which ethical values become part of personal identity rather than external rules. For instance, choosing to share limited water with a neighbor reinforces *rahmah* as active compassion, coordinating with community members during shortages embodies *ukhuwah* as shared moral responsibility, and encountering systemic barriers created by the blockade highlights the relevance of *'adl* in recognizing and confronting injustice. By explicitly linking humanitarian concern to Islamic ethics, the model conveys that compassion and justice are not optional responses but fundamental expressions of faith, thereby strengthening players' motivation to act on behalf of Palestinians beyond the game environment.

In addition to fostering empathy and moral engagement, the model enhances critical awareness of structural injustice. Many young people encounter the Palestinian situation through fragmented media content that can oversimplify the crisis or obscure its systemic dimensions. Through contextual explanations embedded in gameplay, *Live A Day in Gaza* illustrates how blockades, resource restrictions, and damaged infrastructure shape daily life, enabling players to distinguish between incidental hardship and structurally produced suffering. This process cultivates critical humanitarian literacy, equipping players to question depoliticized narratives, challenge misinformation, and engage in informed discussions using ethical reasoning and evidence-based understanding. Such awareness is essential for developing advocates who can communicate responsibly and thoughtfully about complex humanitarian issues.

Importantly, the model recognizes that empathy alone does not automatically lead to action; meaningful humanitarian engagement emerges from the interaction between empathic motivation and a sense of moral obligation. The post-game reflection component translates emotional insights into ethical agency by guiding players to identify concrete actions, such as sharing educational materials, participating in humanitarian fundraising, attending awareness initiatives, or advocating through campus and community organizations. Although these actions may appear modest, they represent the initial formation of ethical agency—the capacity to act consistently with moral principles. Consistent with prior research, structured reflection and personal action planning increase the likelihood of sustained engagement with social issues over time (Moyer-Gusé, 2008).

Beyond individual transformation, immersive learning also reinforces community and solidarity. When the game is experienced collectively in classrooms or workshop settings, players engage in dialogue about their decisions, emotional responses, and ethical reflections, fostering collective empathy and shared moral commitment. The integration of *ukhuwah* is particularly salient in this communal context, as players recognize that their concerns and responsibilities are shared by peers, strengthening a sense of unity around the obligation to support the oppressed. This collective dimension of empathy is crucial for mobilizing broader humanitarian movements and sustaining long-term social engagement.

Finally, the model addresses key limitations of contemporary digital activism, which, despite increasing global awareness, often suffers from superficial engagement, performative participation, misinformation, and emotional fatigue. Immersive educational tools such as *Live A Day in Gaza* offer an alternative by providing structured, reflective, and ethically grounded experiences that encourage informed rather than reactive advocacy. By fostering critical thinking, moral reflection, and compassionate action, the model shifts digital engagement from transient expressions of concern toward thoughtful and sustained humanitarian advocacy. Moreover, its conceptual structure has relevance beyond the Palestinian context, as the integration of immersive learning and faith-based ethics can be adapted to address other humanitarian challenges, including refugee crises, social marginalization, and climate-related disasters, demonstrating the broader educational potential of the proposed approach.

4. Conclusions

This narrative review examines how Islamic ethics and immersive game-based learning can be integrated to strengthen youth awareness, empathy, and moral engagement toward the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine. Through synthesizing interdisciplinary literature in Islamic studies, digital pedagogy, empathy psychology, and conflict research, the study proposes a conceptual model for an educational game titled "Live A Day in Gaza." The model aims to bridge a critical gap between passive digital exposure and active humanitarian concern among young Muslimah gap increasingly evident in the social media era. The findings suggest that Islamic ethical principles *rahmah*, *ukhuwah*, and *'adl* provide a powerful moral foundation for responding to the Palestinian crisis. These values emphasize compassion for the oppressed, solidarity with those who suffer, and commitment to justice. However, traditional methods of religious or civic education often struggle to translate these values into meaningful emotional experiences for youth. This is where immersive learning offers a transformative opportunity.

Immersive game-based environments encourage learners to step into the lived experiences of others, fostering deeper emotional resonance and moral understanding. By simulating daily challenges under blockade such as food scarcity, water shortages, loss of electricity, or fears of airstrikes, the proposed game model enables players to grasp the emotional weight of life in Gaza. Importantly, the game does not sensationalize violence. Instead, it focuses on structural deprivation and everyday resilience, aligning with ethical standards for responsible humanitarian education.

The integration of Islamic ethics into the game design further enhances its pedagogical impact. Players not only understand hardship they learn to interpret their choices through the lens of compassion, solidarity, and justice. This ethical layer encourages reflective learning, helping players connect their emotional responses to the moral obligations emphasized in Islamic teachings. Such integration strengthens the likelihood that empathy felt during gameplay will translate into real-world advocacy and humanitarian engagement.

The conceptual model also addresses limitations in digital activism. While social media has amplified visibility of Palestinian suffering, it often leads to compassion fatigue or shallow engagement. In contrast, immersive learning structures emotional and cognitive engagement, providing a pathway from awareness to informed, empathetic action. Through post-game reflection and action planning, the model supports youth in identifying concrete steps educational, charitable, or advocacy-oriented those can take in support of Palestinian rights. In conclusion, "Live A Day in Gaza" illustrates the potential of combining Islamic ethics with immersive pedagogy to cultivate empathetic, informed, and justice-oriented youth. While empirical testing is still needed, the conceptual framework offers a promising educational innovation that can be adapted for broader humanitarian contexts. As digital learning continues to shape youth consciousness, integrating faith-based values and immersive technologies may represent a vital strategy for fostering global compassion and moral action.

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Author Contribution

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

The authors used ChatGPT (GPT-5) for language refinement, structural organization, and expansion of ideas in accordance with the authors' direction. All content was reviewed, modified, and approved by the authors. The AI tool did not replace the authors' analytical or conceptual contributions.

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